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SOME PRINCIPLES OF SELF HEALING*

The following principles are designed to help professionals (protectors and providers) recognize, contain, and heal **event** countertransferences (carers' reactions to the stories of trauma events rather than to the victims themselves).

A. To *recognize* one's reactions:

1. Develop awareness of somatic signals of distress -- one's chart of warning signs of potential countertransference reactions, e.g., sleeplessness, headaches, perspiration.
2. Try to find words to name accurately and to articulate one's inner experiences and feelings. As Bettelheim (1984) commented, "what cannot be talked about can also not be put to rest; and if it is not, the wounds continue to fester from generation to generation" (p. 166).

B. To *contain* one's reactions:

1. Identify one's personal level of comfort in order to build openness, tolerance and readiness to hear **anything**.
2. Knowing that every emotion has a beginning, a middle, and an end, learn to attenuate one's fear of being overwhelmed by its intensity to try to feel its full life-cycle without resorting to defensive countertransference reactions.

C. To *heal and grow*

1. Accept that nothing will ever be the same.
2. When one feels wounded, one should take time, accurately diagnose, soothe and heal before being "emotionally fit" again to continue to work.
3. Seek consultation or further therapy for previously unexplored areas triggered by patients' stories.
4. Any one of the affective reactions (i.e., grief, mourning, rage) may interact with old, un-worked through experiences of the therapists. They will thus be able to use their professional work purposefully for their own growth.
5. Establish a network of people to create a holding environment (Winnicott, 1965) within which one can share one's trauma related work.
6. Therapists should provide themselves with avocational avenues for creative and relaxing self expression in order to regenerate energies.

Being kind to oneself and feeling free to have fun and joy is not a frivolity in this field but a necessity without which one cannot fulfill one's professional obligations, one's professional contract.

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